

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2550

As Passed House:
February 11, 2004

Title: An act relating to community-based and faith-based social services organizations.

Brief Description: Providing liaisons for community-based and faith-based social service organizations.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representative Boldt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/26/04, 1/29/04 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/11/04, 93-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to designate a liaison in each administrative region for community-based and faith-based social services organizations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

On January 29, 2001, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Office) was established by Executive Order. The Office has lead responsibility to strengthen and expand the role of faith-based and community organizations. The Office works with federal agencies, Congress, and state and local governments to promote policy, legal, and regulatory changes to enable greater participation by faith-based and community organizations by improving the opportunities, capacity, and expertise of those organizations. The Office also

works with the private nonprofit and for-profit sectors, faith communities, and neighborhood groups to promote involvement in community service.

Five Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Centers) have also been established within the following federal departments: Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Education, and Labor. The purpose of the Centers is to coordinate department efforts to eliminate regulatory, contracting, and other programmatic obstacles to the participation of faith-based and community organizations in the provision of social services.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to designate a person within each of the administrative regions of the DSHS to serve as a liaison for community-based and faith-based social services organizations, regardless of denomination.

The liaison must be available to those organizations for the purpose of:

- providing information as it relates to opportunities for those organizations to cooperate with the DSHS in providing community services throughout the state;
- identifying areas of need that are not currently being met in the state that community-based and faith-based social services organizations may provide; and
- coordinating efforts to promote involvement of community-based and faith-based social service organizations in providing community services.

The Secretary of the DSHS is required to include provisions in its contracts indicating that community-based and faith-based social services organizations that receive funds from the DSHS must not:

- engage in discrimination that denies service to a potential client on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, religion, or presence of a disability; or
- engage in activities that promote conversion to a particular faith, institution, or cause, unless participation in those activities is voluntary.

The DSHS is required to achieve the purposes of the bill through existing resources.

By January 1, 2005, and annually for the four years thereafter, the DSHS is required to report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature on the activities of the liaisons, including identification of the community-based and faith-based organizations served.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The DSHS liaisons must serve all community-based and faith-based social services organizations, rather than only those that do not receive funding directly from the state.

The Secretary of the DSHS is required to include provisions in its contracts indicating that community-based and faith-based social services organizations that receive funds from the DSHS must not:

- engage in discrimination that denies service to a potential client on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, religion, or presence of a disability; or
- engage in activities that promote conversion to a particular faith, institution, or cause, unless participation in those activities is voluntary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) This bill is a companion to a bill from last year with the limitation to organizations that do not receive funding directly from the state. There is an incredible need in the state for services, especially for front-end services. Outside help is needed, because funds are limited and because common, person-to-person assistance is best provided by community-based and faith-based organizations. This bill provides the opportunity to add on to the services provided by the DSHS with a volunteer base. Faith-based organizations provide a sense of belonging, nurturing, and a spiritual and religious background to resist temptations. Tremendous good can be done by community volunteers who are led by their faith.

(Neutral) The DSHS has put forward unprecedented efforts in working with community-based and faith-based organizations. These organizations can much more intimately work with clients and are better at prevention. With this bill, there is potential for expectations to exceed DSHS' abilities and capacity.

(With concerns) This bill could result in the diversion of public funding for human services. There is also a risk of discrimination relating to who would be served by these organizations. This bill should be amended in the same way that last year's bill was amended and to include all faith-based and community-based organizations.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Boldt, prime sponsor; Brad Herman, New Horizons; Jill Esau, We Care Northwest; and Richard McGrue, Nations Social Services.

(Neutral) Dennis Braddock, Department of Social and Health Services.

(With concerns) Paul Benz, Lutheran Public Policy Office.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.